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TEACHING THE PRESENT PERFECT TENSES.

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THE SIMPLE PRESENT PERFECT AND PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS ARE FOR THE NON-NATIVE SPEAKER OF ENGLISH TWO OF THE MOST TROUBLESOME TENSES IN THE ENGLISH VERB SYSTEM. THEY ARE SOMETIMES CONFUSED WITH A PRESENT TENSE AND SOMETIMES WITH A PAST. ONE OFTEN HEARS A NON-NATIVE SPEAKER OF ENGLISH USE A SIMPLE PRESENT WHERE HE SHOULD USE A SIMPLE PRESENT PERFECT, A PRESENT CONTINUOUS WHERE HE SHOULD USE A PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS, OR A SIMPLE PRESENT PERFECT WHERE HE SHOULD USE A SIMPLE PAST. SOMETIMES THIS IS JUST A CARELESS MISTAKE, BUT MORE OFTEN IT IS A SUBSTITUTION WHICH THE SPEAKER REGULARLY MAKES, TRANSFERRING A STRUCTURE FROM HIS NATIVE LANGUAGE INTO ENGLISH. HE MAKES THIS TRANSFERENCE BECAUSE HE LACKS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF THESE TWO TENSES, WHICH ARE NEITHER WHOLLY PRESENT NOR WHOLLY PAST, BUT PARADOXICALLY BOTH PRESENT AND PAST. A DESCRIPTION OF THESE TWO TENSES, DRILLS AND EXERCISES INVOLVING THEIR USE, AND EXERCISES TO CONTRAST THE TWO ARE PRESENTED. THIS ARTICLE APPEARS IN "TESOL QUARTERLY," VOLUME 1, NUMBER 4, DECEMBER 1967, PUBLISHED BY TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES, AT THE INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20007. (AUTHOR/AMM)

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# TESOL QUARTERLY

A Journal for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages



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Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

# *Teaching the Present Perfect Tenses*

**Ralph H. Walker**

THE SIMPLE PRESENT PERFECT and the PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS are for the non-native speaker of English two of the most troublesome tenses in the English verb system. They are sometimes confused with a present tense and sometimes with a past. One often hears a non-native speaker of English use a simple present where he should use a simple present perfect (* I AM HERE FOR THREE DAYS instead of I HAVE BEEN HERE FOR THREE DAYS), a present continuous where he should use a present perfect continuous (* I AM STUDYING ENGLISH FOR THREE YEARS instead of I HAVE BEEN STUDYING ENGLISH FOR THREE YEARS), or a simple present perfect where he should use a simple past (* I HAVE ARRIVED FIVE MINUTES AGO instead of I ARRIVED FIVE MINUTES AGO). Sometimes this is just a careless mistake, but more often it is a substitution which the speaker regularly makes. In making this substitution, he is in all likelihood transferring a structure from his native language into English, and he is making this transference because he lacks an understanding of the nature of the English present perfect tenses. He is not aware that these two tenses are neither wholly present nor wholly past, but are, paradoxically, both present and past. This is a subtle but vital point, and no teacher can really teach these tenses without understanding this fact. It is an easy matter to teach a student how to form the present perfect tenses, but quite another matter to teach him when to use them.

The SIMPLE PRESENT PERFECT describes an action which occurred within a present time frame, that is, within a period of time which includes the present moment—a period of time beginning at some defined or undefined point of time in the past and continuing up to now. The speaker is not concerned with placing this action at a specific point of time. If he were interested in indicating the precise time when the action of which he is speaking occurred, he would use a past time indicator—*last week, last night, yesterday, a few minutes ago, at 8:15, when I was a child, before I came here, at breakfast,* or some other word or phrase indicating a past time—and the simple past tense.[1] Instead of

* An asterisk before a sentence indicates that the sentence is not acceptable English.

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[1] Although the simple past tense is usually accompanied by or is placed in the vicinity of a past time indicator, this is not necessarily so: SHAKESPEARE WROTE COMEDIES, HISTORIES, AND TRAGEDIES. WHO THREW THAT ROCK? WHY DID YOU SAY THAT? I SAID IT BECAUSE I BELIEVED IT. HE HAS HIS LEG IN A CAST BECAUSE HE BROKE HIS ANKLE. COLUMBUS DISCOVERED AMERICA. The speaker thinks of each of these actions as having occurred at some time in the past, at a time completely separated from the present; but since he is not interested in the time and does not feel that a time indicator is essential, he does not include one.

situating his action at a definite point of time in the past, the speaker places it within a period of time which extends from some point in the past up to now and uses the simple present perfect tense to recount the action. This period of time is often defined by such words as *today, this morning, this afternoon, this evening, tonight, this week, this month, this semester, this year, recently, lately, already, yet, ever, never, so far, up to now, within the last* or *within the past . . . (hour, week, month, year, two minutes, three hours, four days, five weeks, six months, seven years), just,*[2] *for* (with a time word or phrase), and *since* (with a time word, phrase, or clause), but often there is no time indicator at all.[3] It cannot be given as an absolute rule, however, that each of these time indicators is found only with one of the present perfect tenses. A few of them—*lately, so far, yet, within the last . . .* or *past . . . , since*—are used only with the present perfect tenses, but most of them—*today, this morning, this afternoon, this evening, tonight, this week, this month, this year, this semester, recently, never, ever, already, for*—are used with both the present perfect tenses and the simple past.[4] The choice of verb tense with the last group of words depends upon whether the action to be described took place within a past time frame—a period of time before now and completely separated from now—or within a present time frame—a period of time beginning before now and including now.

The simple present perfect tense can be most effectively taught in contrast with the simple past tense since this is the area of greatest confusion, and the difference between these two tenses

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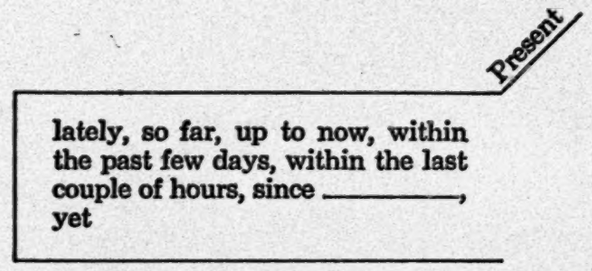
[2] The word *just* referring to the immediate past is sometimes used with the simple present perfect and sometimes with the simple past with no difference in meaning. HE HAS JUST LEFT. HE JUST LEFT. These are both standard English. Another example of this overlap of the simple past and the simple present perfect with no change of time frame and no change in meaning is found in the relative clause following a superlative when the word *ever* is present: THAT'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SUNSET I'VE EVER SEEN (present time frame) and THAT'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SUNSET I EVER SAW (present time frame). When any other time indicator in the present time frame is used in this construction, we find only the simple present perfect: THIS IS THE BEST BOOK I'VE READ IN YEARS. A similar structure which is always followed by the simple present perfect is *this is the first time:* THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE VISITED THIS COUNTRY.

[3] The simple present perfect is very often unaccompanied by a time indicator. The time, although unspecified, is thought of as being in a present time frame. TENNESSEE WILLIAMS HAS WRITTEN MANY PLAYS. (Tennessee Williams is a living playwright. Compare this sentence with SHAKESPEARE WROTE COMEDIES, HISTORIES, AND TRAGEDIES.) This is especially true of questions when the speaker is interested only in the action and not in the time. Into these questions one could easily insert a time indicator such as *yet, ever, recently.* HAVE YOU (ever) BEEN TO EUROPE? YES, I'VE BEEN THERE SEVERAL TIMES (in my life). HAVE YOU HEARD THE LATEST NEWS (yet)? WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN (for the last few minutes, recently)? HAVE YOU SEEN THE MOVIE AT THE RITZ (yet)? HAVE YOU SEEN BILL (today)? YES, I HAVE. I SAW HIM AT BREAKFAST THIS MORNING. In the first answer to the last question, there is no interest in the time; in the last answer there is interest in the time as well as in the action.

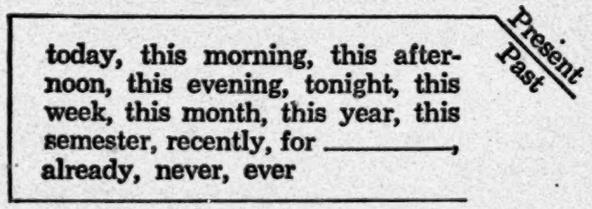
[4] With the exception of *recently, ever,* and *never* all the words in the last group can also be used with the present continuous. For the difference between the present continuous and the present perfect continuous see the last paragraph of this discussion.

can be easily demonstrated by reference to the time frames. In order to illustrate the present, or open, time frame visually, draw on the blackboard a three-sided box open on the right side.

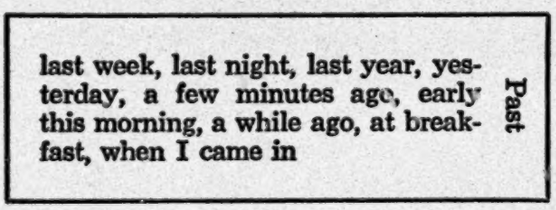
As long as the action has *already* occurred (thus distinguished from the simple present, which occurs repeatedly, and from the present continuous, which is occurring now) and the time indicator includes the present, the box stays open, dictating the use of a present perfect tense; but as soon as a past time indicator is used, the box closes, dictating the use of a simple past tense, for now the time of the action is completely divorced from the present, and we have a past, or closed, time frame.




*Time Frame I*
With these time indicators, the time frame is always open, and we always use a present perfect tense.


Present
Past
today, this morning, this afternoon, this evening, tonight, this week, this month, this year, this semester, recently, for _____, already, never, ever

*Time Frame II*
With these time indicators the time frame is sometimes open and sometimes closed. When it is open, we use a present perfect tense; when it is closed, we use a simple past tense.




*Time Frame III*

With these time indicators the time frame is always closed, and we always use a simple past tense.

Compare the following sentenses:

1. today (box is open) — I've seen Bill several times today. (I say this sometime during the day.)
2. today (box is closed) — I saw Bill several times today. (I say this at night when I am looking back upon the day as past.)
3. yesterday (box is closed) — I saw Bill several times yesterday.
4. this morning (box is open) — I've written several letters this morning. (I make this statement during the morning.)
5. this morning (box is closed) — I wrote several letters this morning. (I make this statement during the afternoon or evening about a period of time that has ended.)

| | |
|---|---|
| 6. this afternoon (box is open) | Bill has called me twice this afternoon. (I say this during the afternoon.) |
| 7. this afternoon (box is closed) | Bill called me twice this afternoon. (I say this during the evening.) |
| 8. this evening (box is open) | I've done a lot of work this evening. (I say this during the course of the evening.) |
| 9. this evening (box is closed) | I did a lot of work this evening. (I say this probably just before I go to bed when I am thinking of the evening as finished.) |
| 10. this week (box is open) | I've gone to town only once this week. (I say this sometime during the week.) |
| 11. this week (box is closed) | I went to town only once this week. (I say this at the end of the week about a period of time I am thinking of as finished.) |
| 12. last week (box is closed) | I went to town only once last week. |
| 13. this month (box is open) | We've done the first six lessons this month. |
| 14. this month (box is closed) | We did the first six lessons this month. |
| 15. last month (box is closed) | We did the first six lessons last month. |
| 16. this year (box is open) | This has been a good year. I've made a lot of progress this year. (I make this statement during the year—likely toward the close of the year—about a period of time not yet over.) |
| 17. this year[a] (box is closed) | This was a good year. I made a lot of progress this year. (I make this statement at the end of the year when I am looking at the year in retrospect.) |
| 18. last year (box is closed) | Last year was a good year. I made a lot of progress last year. |
| 19. recently (box is open) | I've seen Paul several times recently. I haven't seen Bill recently. (*Recently* here means within the last few days or weeks and is synonymous with *lately*, which is always accompanied by the present perfect.) |
| 20. recently (box is closed) | I saw Paul recently in Chicago. Mr. Smith died recently. (Here *recently* means not long ago and is not synonymous with *lately*.) |
| 21. lately (box is open) | I haven't seen any good movies lately. |
| 22. ever (box is open) | Have you ever been to Europe? (*Ever* here means within your lifetime, a period of time which has not ended.) |
| 23. ever (box is closed) | Was Shakespeare ever in America? (Here *ever* means during Shakespeare's lifetime, a period of time which has ended.) |

[a] In sentences 9, 11, 14, and 17 one might just as readily use the simple present perfect as the simple past, for although a speaker might be considering this period of time in retrospect as he would *last week, last year,* or *last night,* he might at the same time feel that he is still within the period of time of which he is speaking.

| | |
|---|---|
| 24. never (box is open) | I've never visited Europe. (Not in my lifetime, a period of time which has not ended.) |
| 25. never (box is closed) | Shakespeare never visited America. (Not in his lifetime, a period of time which has ended.) |
| 26. before (box is open) | I've seen this movie before. (*Before* now.) |
| 27. before (box is closed) | I saw that movie before Christmas. (*Before* some past time.) |
| 28. already (box is open) | John has already stopped working. (*Already* here means before now.) |
| 29. already (box is closed) | He was already tired when he started working. (Here *already* means before he began.) |
| 30. for two days (box is open) | I've been here for two days. (And I am still here.) |
| 31. for two days (box is closed) | I was in New York for two days last year. |
| 32. since breakfast<br>since I ate breakfast<br>(box is open) | I've had two cups of coffee since breakfast.<br>I've had two cups of coffee since I ate breakfast. |
| 33. at breakfast (box is closed) | I had two cups of coffee at breakfast. |
| 34. within the last ten minutes (box is open) | John has called me twice within the last ten minutes. |
| 35. ten minutes ago (box is closed) | John called me ten minutes ago. |
| 36. within the last (or past) year (box is open) | I've seen Bill several times within the last year. (Within the period of time beginning a year ago and ending now.) |
| 37. last year (box is closed) | I saw Bill several times last year. |

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* In standard English *already* is used with both of the present perfect tenses. It is also used with the simple past of the verb *to be* (rarely with the past of other verbs) when the accompanying time expression—usually a clause—indicates an action subsequent to the action in the main clause. MARY WAS ALREADY THERE WHEN I ARRIVED. I ALREADY KNEW THAT BEFORE YOU TOLD ME. *Yet* is used with the simple present perfect but not with the past tense in standard English.

We sometimes hear such a sentence as I'LL CALL YOU AS SOON AS I'VE FINISHED, where the speaker is using the simple present perfect to describe an obviously future action: he has not finished yet, but he will at some future time, and then he will call. Often when we have two future actions, one of which is going to happen before the other and there is no time connective such as *then, before,* or *after* to indicate the sequence of the actions, we put the first action in the main clause and in the simple future perfect tense, and the later action in a time clause and in the simple present tense. I'LL HAVE FINISHED (first action) COLLEGE WHEN I RETURN (second action) HOME. In other words I'LL FINISH COLLEGE, AND THEN I'LL RETURN HOME or I'LL FINISH COLLEGE BEFORE I RETURN HOME. In the sentence I'LL CALL YOU AS SOON AS I'VE FINISHED the sequence of the actions is reversed: the first action is in the time clause and the subsequent action is in the main clause. In other words I'LL FINISH, AND THEN I'LL CALL YOU or I'LL CALL YOU AFTER I FINISH. Just as we do not ordinarily use the future tense in a time clause in English, we do not use the future perfect in a time clause. Instead of the future we use the simple present, and instead of the future perfect we use the simple present perfect.[7]

[7] Here we find another example of overlap of tenses with no change in meaning. In this case the overlap is between the simple present perfect and the simple present in a future time frame: I'LL GIVE YOU MY DECISION AFTER *I'VE DISCUSSED* THE MATTER WITH MY FAMILY and I'LL GIVE YOU MY DECISION AFTER I *DISCUSS* THE MATTER WITH MY FAMILY.

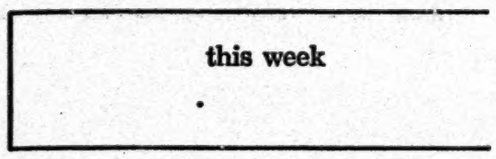
The PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS tense has the present time frame in common with the simple present perfect, but whereas the simple present perfect describes one or more occurrences of an action—each occurrence being a complete and finished performance[8]—within a period of time including the present, the present perfect continuous usually describes an incomplete action covering a period of time that began at some point in the past and has continued uninterruptedly[9]

[8] Since words of frequency (*often, occasionally, never*) and words of repetition (*four times, many times*) express repetition of a complete action, they accompany the simple present perfect, and not the present perfect continuous (see the following footnote), which is an incomplete action. I HAVE (NEVER, OFTEN, FREQUENTLY) VISITED THAT MUSEUM (TWICE, SEVERAL TIMES, ON MANY OCCASIONS). Each of these visits is a separate and complete action.

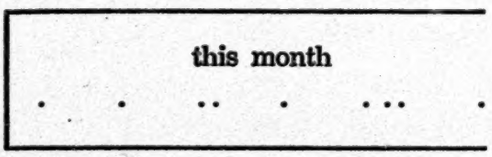
[9] Occasionally one hears a sentence that seems to contradict this statement, but it really does not. I'VE BEEN GOING TO THE PARK *EVERY* DAY FOR A WEEK. I'VE BEEN VISITING MY GRANDMOTHER *EVERY* SUNDAY FOR YEARS. I'VE BEEN GOING TO THE MOVIES *TWICE* A WEEK FOR THE PAST YEAR. WE'VE BEEN PLAYING CHESS FAIRLY *OFTEN* FOR THE PAST YEAR. *Every* and *twice* express repetition, and *often* is an adverb of frequency, but notice that they are followed by *for a week, for years, for the past year,* expressions of time with which one expects to find a present perfect continuous. The speaker of these sentences does not view his actions as a series of separate actions, but rather as a continuum. A similar example is I'VE BEEN STUDYING FRENCH OFF AND ON FOR YEARS. The speaker does not think of this action as being intermittent, but as continuous. His emphasis is not on *off and on* but on *for years.*

up to now.[10] (The action may, of course, continue on into the future, but this is irrelevant, for we are concerned only with the time up to now.) On a time frame a dot can represent a complete action, and a wavy line can illustrate an incomplete action—an unbroken measurement of time extending from the past into now.

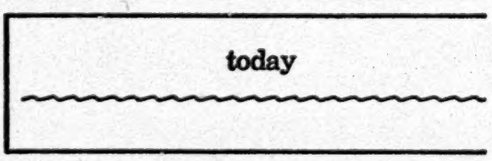
Very often the time frame of the present perfect continuous is defined by the word *for* with a time word or



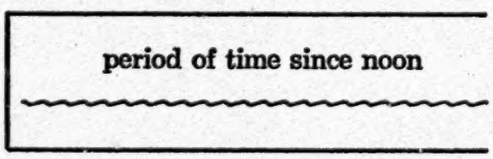

I've gone to the movies once this week. (One complete past action in a present time frame.)



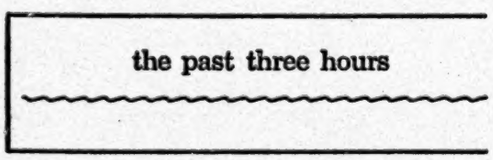

I've gone to the movies several times this month. (Several repetitions of the same action in a present time frame.)



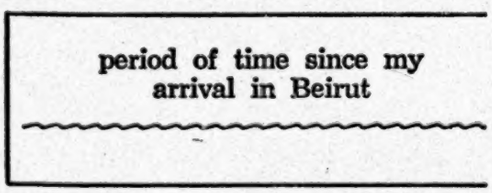

I've been studying all day. (An action which began this morning and is still going on.)




I've been studying ever since noon. (An activity which began at noon and is still going on.)




I've been studying for the past three hours. (An activity which began three hours ago and is still going on.)




I've been living in this apartment ever since my arrival in Beirut. (A situation which began when I arrived in Beirut and has continued up to now.)

[10] We think of the present perfect continuous tense as describing an action continuing up to the present moment, and this is usually true, but not necessarily so. Although an activity may have ceased before a speaker speaks of it, he may think of it as a continuous action in a present time frame. I might be home sitting in a comfortable armchair when I say, "I'M EXHAUSTED. I'VE BEEN WALKING ALL DAY." Clearly I am not walking when I say this. When I look outside early in the morning and find the streets wet, I will probably say, "IT'S BEEN RAINING" even though the rain has ceased and the sun is now shining. In the story "The Three Bears" each of the bears on his return home cries, "SOMEONE HAS BEEN EATING MY PORRIDGE" and then, "SOMEONE HAS BEEN SITTING IN MY CHAIR," although Goldilocks had tried both the porridge and the chairs and then gone upstairs to sleep sometime before the bears came home.

phrase expressing duration (a period of time), a time expression without *for* but also expressing duration *(all day, all afternoon)*, or *since* with a time word, phrase, or clause indicating a point at which the activity began. In the case of *since* we are concerned not with the point of time at which the action started but with the period of time that has elapsed between that point of time and now.[11] In addition to these time indicators, *lately* and occasionally *so far* and *up to now* from Time Frame I, and all of those words in Time Frame II except *ever* and *never* can be used with the present perfect continuous:

I've been working *for two hours.*
We've been waiting *two hours* for you.
I've been working on this problem *all afternoon.*
I've been waiting for you *since two o'clock.*
I've been studying English ever *since I was a child.*
I've been studying English ever *since I've been in high school.*[12]
You've been doing very well in English *lately.*
You've been doing very well in English *so far.*
We've been spending most of our time on verbs *recently.*
John's been working very hard *today.*
I've been concentrating on my physics course *this semester.*
I've been expecting my sister to call *this evening.*
I've been eating in the cafeteria *this year.*
I've *already* been studying for two hours, and I haven't finished yet.

Although one occasionally finds an overlap between the simple present perfect and the present perfect continuous (I'VE STUDIED ALL AFTERNOON and I'VE BEEN STUDYING ALL AFTERNOON), there is a distinct difference between these two tenses just as there is between the simple present and the present continuous or between the simple past and the past continuous, and a native speaker of English will nearly always observe this distinction. Each verb tense in the English verb system has its own use, and despite an occasional overlap, it is rare that a change in verb tense does not signal a change in time and thereby alter the meaning

[11] *Since* with a time word or clause is used only with the present perfect tenses, but *for* with a time word or phrase is found with other tenses. Although *for* with a time expression is used with both the simple present and the present continuous tenses—I TRAVEL FOR THREE MONTHS EVERY YEAR and MY MOTHER IS VISITING ME FOR TWO WEEKS AND THEN GOING ON TO SEE MY BROTHER—it is never used with these two tenses to describe an action which began in the past and is still going on. Only the present perfect continuous can do this: I'VE BEEN WORKING HERE FOR THREE MONTHS.

[12] Although the verb of the *since* clause is usually a simple past tense, we use a present perfect continuous, or in the case of a few verbs (see footnote 13) a simple present perfect in this clause if the verb describes an existing or continuing situation in a present time frame. This occurs primarily with such verbs as *stay, live, stand, sit, lie.* Compare the following pairs of sentences: HE HAS SPOKEN TO ME SEVERAL TIMES SINCE I *SAT* DOWN HERE (past time frame) and HE HAS SPOKEN TO ME SEVERAL TIMES SINCE I*'VE BEEN SITTING* HERE (present time frame); I'VE BEEN VERY HAPPY EVER SINCE I *MOVED* TO THIS TOWN (past time frame) and I'VE BEEN VERY HAPPY EVER SINCE I*'VE BEEN LIVING* IN THIS TOWN (present time frame); WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS EVER SINCE WE *MET* (past time frame) and WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS EVER SINCE WE*'VE KNOWN* EACH OTHER (present time frame—see footnote 13).

of the sentence. The simple present perfect like the other simple tenses expresses a complete, a whole action.[13] The present perfect continuous tense like the other continuous tenses expresses an incomplete action, an action in process. Compare the following pairs of sentences: I'*VE READ* THIS BOOK, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER A THING ABOUT IT (a complete, finished action) and I'*VE BEEN READING* THIS BOOK FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS (incomplete, in process); I'*VE STUDIED* SEVERAL LANGUAGES, BUT I'*VE FORGOTTEN* THEM ALL (complete action) and I'*VE BEEN STUDYING* ENGLISH FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS (incomplete, in process); I'*VE LIVED* IN MANY COUNTRIES, BUT I'*VE* NEVER *LIVED* VERY LONG IN ANY ONE (complete action) and I'*VE BEEN LIVING* IN THIS COUNTRY FOR SEVERAL YEARS (incomplete, in process).

One problem that learners of English frequently encounter involves a choice between the present continuous and the present perfect continuous; yet there is a clear distinction between these two continuous tenses. Each has a different point of concern, and the choice that a speaker makes depends upon the focus of his interest. He chooses the present continuous when he is concerned only with the present. The activity certainly began in the past and may continue into the future, but this is completely irrelevant. The speaker's focus is on now. He is interested only in stating that an activity is in progress now; he is not interested in how long it has been going on. I'M WAITING FOR MY BROTHER. I'M STUDYING AGRICULTURE. I'M ATTENDING COLLEGE THIS YEAR. I'M LIVING IN A DORMITORY THIS SEMESTER. When the speaker focuses his interest on the duration of the activity, he chooses the present perfect continuous.[14] I'VE BEEN WAITING TWO HOURS FOR MY BROTHER. I'VE BEEN STUDYING AGRICULTURE EVER SINCE I STARTED COLLEGE. I'VE BEEN ATTENDING COLLEGE FOR TWO YEARS. I'VE BEEN LIVING IN A DORMITORY SINCE SEPTEMBER. I'VE BEEN LIVING IN A DORMITORY ALL YEAR.

## SAMPLE EXERCISES

A mastery of the present perfect tenses like that of any other grammatical construction requires intensive and varied drill. The following suggestions may prove useful in making exercises for classroom drill.

I. Exercises on the Simple Present Perfect

A. Ask yes-no questions using the simple present perfect tense. Include the word *ever*. Have your students give complete sentence answers with the word *never*. Point out that in a perfect tense the adverb of frequency goes before the past participle.

*Examples:*

1. teacher: Have you ever gone to Damascus?

[13] Certain verbs which by their meaning imply continuousness are usually used in the simple present perfect rather than in the present perfect continuous. I'VE BEEN HERE FOR SEVERAL HOURS. I'VE OWNED THIS HOUSE FOR YEARS. I'VE ALWAYS PREFERRED COFFEE TO TEA. WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER SINCE WE WERE CHILDREN. THEY'VE DISLIKED EACH OTHER EVER SINCE THEY MET.

[14] See footnote 11.

student: No, I've never gone to Damascus.

2. teacher: Have you ever seen the Nile?
student: No, I've never seen the Nile.

3. teacher: Have you ever crossed a desert?
student: No, I've never crossed a desert.

B. Have one student ask a question with the simple present perfect and the word *ever*. In order to make the exercise go more quickly, you might give him the cue for his question. Have another student give a short answer (the subject with only the auxiliary verb) with the word *never*. Point out that in a short answer the adverb of frequency precedes the auxiliary verb.

*Examples:*

1. teacher: play chess
1st student: Have you ever played chess?
2nd student: No, I never have.

2. teacher: write a poem
1st student: Have you ever written a poem?
2nd student: No, I never have.

3. teacher: read this book
1st student: Have you ever read this book?
2nd student: No, I never have.

C. Ask questions using time words with the simple present perfect. Have your students give affirmative answers using the same time word if possible and including the expression of repetition you suggest. Point out that a word of repetition precedes a time expression.

*Examples:*

1. teacher: Have you been to town recently? several times
student: Yes, I've been to town several times recently.

2. teacher: Has it rained this week? three or four times
student: Yes, it's rained three or four times this week.

3. teacher: Have you been to the beach this summer? almost every day
student: Yes, I've been to the beach almost every day this summer.

II. Exercises to Contrast the Simple Past and the Simple Present Perfect

A. Ask a yes-no question in the simple past tense with a past time indicator. Have your students answer with a two part sentence: the first part should be negative with a verb in the simple past accompanied by the same past time indicator as in your question, and the second part should be affirmative with the verb in the simple present perfect accompanied by a time indicator in the present time frame.

*Examples:*

1. teacher: Did you see my brother yesterday?
student: No, I didn't see him yesterday, but I've seen him twice today.

2. teacher: Did you write any letters last night?
student: No, I didn't write any letters last night, but I've written several tonight.

3. teacher: Did you take a trip last year?
student: No, I didn't take a trip last year, but I've taken three this year.

B. Give your students a sentence in the simple past tense with a past time indicator. Have them repeat your sentence and then add one,

either affirmative or negative, with the verb in the simple present perfect and with an appropriate time indicator.

*Examples:*

1. teacher: I saw Bill once yesterday.
   student: I saw Bill once yesterday, and I've seen him twice today.
   or I saw Bill once yesterday, but I haven't seen him today.
2. teacher: We did two problems last night.
   student: We did two problems last night, and we've done three tonight.
   or We did two problems last night, but we haven't done any tonight.
3. teacher: Tom called me several months ago.
   student: Tom called me several months ago, and he has called me several times recently.
   or Tom called me several months ago, but he hasn't called me recently.

C. Ask a yes-no question with the verb in the simple present perfect. Have your students give first an affirmative short answer, and then add a sentence in which they give a specific time for the action.

*Examples:*

1. teacher: Have you been in Mexico?
   student: Yes, I have. I was there last year.
2. teacher: Have you read this book?
   student: Yes, I have. I read it last summer.
3. teacher: Has Tom left yet?
   student: Yes, he has. He left thirty minutes ago.

In all these exercises that involve questions and answers the teacher can, of course, have a student ask the questions by providing the cue.

1. teacher: be in Mexico
   1st student: Have you been in Mexico?
   2nd student: Yes, I have. I was there last year.

D. When you feel that your students have mastered this pattern, assign a written paragraph of about seven or eight sentences. Choose a subject which will elicit only the simple present perfect tense. Your directions might be as follows:

Write a paragraph of about eight sentences in which you tell some of the things you have done this week (this month, this year, since you got up this morning). Do not use any past time expressions in your paragraph.

Write a paragraph of about eight sentences in which you tell some of the places you have visited and some of the things you have seen since you came to this country. Do not use any past time expressions in your paragraph.

III. Exercises on the Present Perfect Continuous

A. Ask an information question with *when* in which you use the simple past tense. Have a student answer with two sentences: the first with the verb in the simple past and a *when* clause, the second with the verb in the present perfect continuous and a *for* phrase.

*Examples:*

1. teacher: When did you start wearing glasses?
   student: I started wearing glasses when I was ten years old.

I've been wearing them for eight years.

2. teacher: When did you start studying English?
   student: I started studying English when I was twelve. I've been studying it for six years.
3. teacher: When did you start attending this school?
   student: I started attending this school when I was fourteen. I've been attending this school for two years.

It is not necessary, of course, that you use the verb *start*. It makes the drill move a little faster because the student can take the following verb and make that the verb in his second sentence. He does not have to search for one, but can concentrate on the pattern. After you have worked on this drill for a while, you might then begin to use other verbs in your questions.

*Examples:*

1. teacher: When did you move to Beirut?
   student: I moved to Beirut when I was eight. I've been living here for eight years.
2. teacher: When did you learn to swim?
   student: I learned to swim when I was ten. I've been swimming for seven years.

B. Ask questions with *how long*. Have your students answer these questions using a *since* clause.

*Examples:*

1. teacher: How long have you been wearing glasses?
   student: I've been wearing glasses since I was ten years old.
2. teacher: How long have you been studying English?
   student: I've been studying English since I was twelve.
3. teacher: How long have you been living in Beirut?
   student: I've been living in Beirut since I was eight.

C. You might have your students practice the following elliptical pattern, which is very common in colloquial speech.

*Examples:*

1. teacher: When did you start wearing glasses?
   student: I started wearing glasses when I was ten years old, and I've been wearing them ever since.
2. teacher: When did your family move to Bhamdoun?
   student: My family moved to Bhamdoun when I was six years old, and they've been living there ever since.

In this pattern be sure to include the word *ever*.

IV. Exercises to Contrast the Present Continuous and the Present Perfect Continuous

A. Make a sentence in which you tell what someone is doing (the present continuous). Have a student make of your sentence a statement in which he focuses his interest on the duration of the action (the present perfect continuous).

*Examples:*

1. teacher: I'm studying English.

student: I've been studying English for three years.

2. teacher: Bill's attending American University.

student: Bill's been attending American University for two years.

You might vary this exercise by giving your students a cue for a *since* phrase or a *for* phrase.

B. Make a statement in which you tell what someone did. Include a past time expression. Have one student ask a question with *how long* followed by the present perfect continuous. Have another student answer the question with a sentence including a *for* phrase if you used the word *ago* in your statement or a *since* phrase if you used a date or a time expression without the word *ago*.

*Examples:*

1. teacher: John began studying English in 1963.

1st student: How long has John been studying English?

2nd student: He's been studying English since 1963.

2. teacher: Bob began working on his math assignment thirty minutes ago.

1st student: How long has Bob been working on his math assignment?

2nd student: He's been working on his math assignment for thirty minutes.

3. teacher: John began working on his composition early this morning.

1st student: How long has John been working on his composition?

2nd student: John has been working on his composition since early this morning.

C. You might vary this exercise by having a student ask a question with *how long ago* with the simple past if you used the word *ago* in your statement or *how long* with the present perfect continuous if you used any other time expression. Have another student give an appropriate answer.

*Examples:*

1. teacher: John began studying English in 1963.

1st student: How long has John been studying English?

2nd student: He's been studying English since 1963 (or for four years).

2. teacher: Bill moved to this town two months ago.

1st student: How long ago did Bill move to this town?

2nd student: He moved to this town two months ago.

3. teacher: I became interested in astronomy several years ago.

1st student: How long ago did you become interested in astronomy?

2nd student: I became interested in astronomy several years ago.

To each of the answers with *ago*, the student might add a statement with a *for* phrase, using then a present perfect continuous or a simple present perfect. You would then have the following answers to questions 2 and 3:

He moved to this town two months ago. He has been here for two months.

I became interested in astronomy several years ago. I've been interested in astronomy for several years.